

REMARKS

Claims 1-29 are pending, with claims 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 27, and 29 being independent. Claims 15-25 and 29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,885,074 to Susko (Susko) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,431,112 to Sill (Sill) and U.S. Patent No. 5,824,606 to Dible (Dible). Claims 26-28 are allowed.

Claims 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, and 29 are amended by virtue of this amendment. No new matter has been added.

Regarding the rejection of claims 15-25 and 29, Applicant respectfully submits that none of the cited prior art of Susko, Sill, and Dible, whether taken alone or in any combination, discloses or properly suggests all of the features of at least independent claims 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, and 29.

For example, independent claim 15 recites, "... wherein plasma wider than the width of the upper electrode is generated between said upper electrode and said lower electrode..." Such a feature is shown, for example, in FIG. 1B and its corresponding description within the specification. A similar feature(s) is recited in independent claims 20 and 22.

As another example, independent claim 18 recites, "... wherein plasma is generated outside edge portions of said substrate..." Again, an example of such a feature is illustrated in FIG. 1B. A similar feature(s) is recited in independent claim 29.

As a final example, independent claim 24 recites, "... dividing said substrate in order to obtain a plurality of substrates..." Such a feature is described at, for example, page 23, lines 21-23 of the specification.

Since none of the cited prior art, taken alone or in combination, discloses or properly suggests at least the above features, Applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 15, 18, 20, 22, 24, and 29 are allowable for at least the same reasons, so that dependent claims 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, and 25 are allowable for at least the same reasons. Since claims 26-28 have been allowed, all claims are therefore believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is hereby requested in the Examiner's next official communication.

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Respectfully submitted,

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